Vol. IX, No. 3 HUMAN EVENTS January 16, 1952

THE UNIMPORTANCE OF CANDIDATES

By Frank Chodorov

When you cast your vote for President, come November, you will, in a real sense, vote for yourself. That is in the logic of our political tradition. For, the American doctrine holds that sovereignty resides in the individual, that when he votes he assigns his sovereignty, for a specified time and under certain constitutional limitations, to his agent. But, though the act of voting is the act of delegating sovereignty, the citizen himself is not thereby rid of his character; he is the permanent residuary of his sovereignty.

A paraphrase of the American doctrine would run like this: "I, the citizen, am the top boss in this country of ours, always and under all conditions. But, I have other things to do than manage public affairs. Therefore, I delegate the authority vested in me by the fact of citizenship to an agent who seems to be well-qualified for the job. I hire him — by vote — because he has satisfied me not only as to his capacity and personal qualifications, but also because he has promised to carry out policies which, in my opinion, are for the good of the country. His policies are mine."

In effect, then, the man selected for the Presidency reflects the intelligence and the character of the electorate; he must be of a piece with the generality. Every voter, as he performs his duty in the sacred ballot booth passes judgment on himself, as well as the candidate. He votes for himself. The old adage, "we get the kind of government we deserve", is more than a clever phrase.

The primacy of the voter will be stressed in the campaign speeches in the making. Each candidate will pledge himself, if chosen, to do what he thinks the citizen wants him to do, and he will be careful not to commit himself to a program that may offend any considerable number. To take an extreme example, he may be in favor of polygamy, and during his heyday he may have practiced it; but because he knows that most Americans, particularly the female voters, are dead set against polygamy, he will not include it in his credo. His own credo, if he has one, is unimportant; the one held by the majority of the citizens is all that counts.

Again, when the party platforms are presented to the electorate, it will be observed that the authors have been most careful to include in its promises what every important segment of the population wants, even though the promises may be in contradiction. A platform is really an application for a job, and it is a cardinal principle of application

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composition that the desires and expectations of the prospective employer be catered to. No applicant writes, "I am going to run this job my way, no matter what you think." And so, the party platform, for all its protestations of principle, is nothing but a piece of obsequious writing.

That means that the candidates who are now grooming themselves for the Presidency are relatively of little importance. We might judge between them as to intelligence, integrity, background knowledge or personal decorum, or maybe even pulchritude; but in the essential matter of how public affairs should be run, we must ask ourselves how we want them run. We will certainly get what we collectively want; or, to be exact, what the *majority* want.

II

Well then, what do you, the sovereignty citizen, want in the way of government policy?

It is a certainty that your primary concern is with how you can get along in life, and you expect your government to pay some attention to that problem, as it affects all the citizens. The government can help out in one of two ways. It can maintain order, so that you can work for your living in peace, and be reasonably sure of keeping what you produce. Or, it can, if you insist, steal from other citizens part of their output and give it to you. The choice is yours.

To get down to cases, suppose you are the president of a large corporation, or even an obscure stockholder. The business of the corporation is to make things the people want and are willing to pay for. Because the government has the power to levy taxes, it has the wherewithal with which to pay you to make things the people do not want and would not pay for if they had the money the government took away from them. You like this arrangement, because filling government orders relieves you of the problem of finding out what the market wants, and one big customer is easier to satisfy than a lot of little ones. Therefore, when the candidate grandiloquently expounds on the glory of One Worldism, you are inclined to agree with him; you stamp him as a great statesman. The fact is, your opinion of him is not uninfluenced by the prospect of the orders he will place with you in order to carry out his global adventure. His foreign policy is your business policy.

Whether you are a subsidized tenant or a shored-up banker, you cannot look on public housing with disfavor. In the first case, at least part of your rent is paid for by other citizens, and you are not averse to accepting the handout; the legality of it conveniently relieves your conscience of any sense of shame. If you are a banker, you are

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eminently pleased with the fact that all citizens of the country guarantee payment on the mortgage you hold, both as to interest and as to principle; you are relieved of risk. In either case (or if, as a landowner, you expect to sell a site for public housing), you are easily convinced that public housing is a good thing for the country and you think highly of the candidate who advocates it.

If you are a farmer drawing checks for not planting, or a worker anticipating payment for not working, you are likely to be biased in favor of the candidate who proposes to run the government so as to make such gratuities possible. His advocacy of them proves to you his fitness for office. In voting for him it never occurs to you that you are an accessory to a crime about to be committed.

III

This is as it should be. Written into the very fabric of the American tradition is the dictum that an officeholder is a mere servant of the people. His opinions are their opinions, his wisdom cannot transcend theirs, his policy must be derived from their hopes, wishes and aspirations. He is their *alter ego.* Either that, or out he goes.

Therefore, if you, the sovereign citizen, have a quarrel with the application promises of the various candidates, you must direct your objections to your fellow hirers, not the candidates. You are foolish to find fault with the prospective servant when all he is trying to do is to please his prospective master. The very fact that after shaking down the platform promises of the various candidates you get a uniform residue, should indicate to you that they all have done a good job of analyzing the wishes of the electorate.

Suppose you rate freedom higher than a handout. Suppose you recognize that the price you had to pay for the million dollars you made by way of foreign policy was too high; you had to give up something you hold very precious, like self-respect or integrity; or, perhaps, a son. Suppose you resent being numbered, ticketed, investigated and harassed by officials — all of which is a necessary consequence of living by unemployment insurance or other gratuities — and put a great worth on being let alone. Suppose, in short, you would prefer a government that would neither succor nor hound you.

You can get that kind of government, if you go about it the right way. All you have to do is to induce your fellow citizens to see things as you do. You must assume, *a priori,* their mental capacity to learn what you have learned, their moral capacity to recognize the iniquity of subventions. Granting these qualifications, you have a job of education on your hands. If you do it well you will have candidates enough offering you

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the kind of government you are looking for.

IV

That is to say, governments are shaped in the schools, not the ballot booths. The best that can be done at election time is to effect a change of personnel; whoever is elected will manage affairs according to the concepts of government that were drilled into the minds of the electors long before the campaign started. Of a certainty, education does not stop with everyone on graduation day; all adults are not beyond redemption, and some are even able to read HUMAN EVENTS. But, the pattern of thought shaped before the age of suffrage is difficult of alteration.

This will be demonstrated in the next nine months. The mutual recriminations of the candidates will not obscure the fact that in the essential philosophy of government they will be in solid agreement. They will take for granted — not one will even mention the point — that political power can be employed to improve the condition of society, morally and culturally, as well as economically. Not one will hint that the only competence of government is to maintain order and dispense justice, so that individuals may make the best of the capacities with which they are endowed.

Why this unanimity? Simply because the electorate are likewise unanimous on the infinite capacity of political power to make this the best of all possible worlds. And why are the electorate so thoroughly agreed? Because they all went to American schools and colleges, read the same textbooks and listened to the same teachers. And it is well known that during the past thirty years, when the mental habits of most of our present voters were formed, the educational apparatus of the country has been attuned to the doctrine of omniscient and omnipotent government. The hatful of Americans who are of a different mind are those who have wrenched themselves out of their early training by independent study and reflection.

That this was not always so, that in the early days of the country, and well into this century, the schools stressed individualistic rather than collectivistic values, is known to anyone even cursorily familiar with the history of our educational system. And in those days, the doctrine of limited government held the ascendancy, even with politicians.

So then, if you would make a basic change in government policy, if you would stem the trend toward collectivism, you must address your efforts to the educational front. On the political front you are fighting a rear guard action.

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HUMAN EVENTS

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Volume IX, No. 3 Wednesday, January 16, 1952 Washington, D. C.

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Ghost at the Feast: Above the heads of the Republican National Committee as it meets this week in San Francisco, there hovers a phantom — the candidacy of General Eisenhower.

Now, phantoms don't talk or answer questions. And the flesh-and-blood presence of Senator Lodge can hardly provide answers for the questions which at least one member of the National Committee will raise. They will not concern Ike's stand on taxes, economy, corruption, or other issues of the day. They will concern the General's personal record — his actions as a commander in the last war, his services as occupation commander in Germany after the war and Chief of Staff in 1947, etc., etc. Particularly, etcetera.

This member of the National Committee is a sincere admirer of General Eisenhower but he is also a staunch Republican, anxious that the Party make no mistake in choosing a candidate. Before leaving for the West Coast, he said he would raise these questions because of what President Truman said at his press conference last week. As our friend views it, Truman warned Ike that if the latter became the GOP nominee he should expect some mud-slinging on the part of the Democrats; that the Democratic propaganda machine would attack the General on his personal record as a military man.

Now, that machine — as anyone in Washington, at least, knows — is a fearsome antagonist. In this case, it would have access to all the papers, dispatches, top-level telegrams, correspondence and facts and figures — much more material than Ike possesses and more experts and researchers to brief Democratic speech-writers than Ike will have. Besides, there are a number of matters about Ike's career about which critics of Ike within the GOP have long been privately talking (for instance they mention passages in the unpublished diary of General Patton). The Democratic machine could tap this vein of material even more efficiently than anti-Eisenhower Republicans. It is no secret in Washington that some of this material is already being readied by the Administration.

Hence, the member of the National Committee deems it his bounden duty to bring this situation to the attention of his colleagues at San Francisco. No matter how popular and likable Eisenhower is — he would point out — it would be folly to nominate a man whose record would be subject to attacks from such an authoritative antagonist as his former boss, the Democratic Administration. Some investigation by GOP leaders of the Eisenhower record and impartial judgment thereon is called for. Ordinary prudence would dictate such a course.

First Test: In the state of New Hampshire where the first Presidential preference vote will take place on March 11, General MacArthur led the straw poll being conducted by the Manchester (N.H.) *Union Leader*, largest paper in that state. A total of 1640 ballots were cast and the following is the final score: MacArthur—783; Taft—448; Eisenhower—206; Stassen—160; Warren—26; Dewey—11; Dirksen—6. Styles Bridges, senior Senator of that state, was honored by a write-in vote of 85.

Readers of the *Union Leader* are required to clip the coupon ballot, fill it in and mail it at their own expense. The above score covers the period January 2 to January 9. This newspaper has supported the candidacy of Senator Taft, and there is no real MacArthur organization in that state; the General has not visited there. Hence, the results suggest that there is a strong "grass roots" sentiment for the former Far Eastern Commander.

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The poll also offers confirmation of the report received from our New Hampshire correspondent last week. He stated that, although most of the GOP state hierarchy had come out for Eisenhower, his observations throughout the state led him to believe that there was strong MacArthur and Taft sentiment among the rank and file. Our correspondent also said that unless Eisenhower won an overwhelming preference victory on March 11, the result would be interpreted as adverse to his hopes, in view of the fact that the top level of the state GOP had backed him.

This was the second poll conducted by the *Union Leader* which produced a surprise. Last September, the paper's straw ballot showed prominent candidates in the following order: MacArthur, Taft, Stassen and Eisenhower. MacArthur had 265 votes, Eisenhower 104, or less than half.

Voice of America: The press in the past two days has been reporting imminent changes in the Voice and the international information set-up, forecasting that these organizations will be given a "new semi-independent" status under the Secretary of State. The press does not explain, but we hereby offer to solve the mystery.

The folks in the Voice and Information set-up have been literally scared to death by the mounting chorus of indignation from members of Congress who went to the scene (in Europe) and found the boys either loafing or performing useless boondoggling. (In recent issues we reported the findings of the legislators.) Hence, those who run the set-up have seen the handwriting on the wall. Some have grabbed overseas assignments to take cover from the impending storm, or are simply returning to private life (if they can find a job there).

The announced change in this expensive and futile agency is, of course, just a trick to cushion the wrath of Congress when the State Department sends an official to Capitol Hill to answer questions. Hence, the naming of a new director, Wilson Compton, a gentleman who is an expert on farming, not on propaganda. When he faces a committee and the angry legislators start firing questions, he can quite truthfully say he doesn't know because he's just arrived.

The designation "semi-independent status" means that the same old show will continue to run with the same old actors, only more of them. We learn that it will serve as a refuge for a lot of bureaucrats whose jobs would otherwise be terminated. Thus, as Western Occupied Germany is turned into an independent nation again, the "information" personnel of the U. S. civilian agencies there will have to land chairs in some other place. Preparations, indeed, are already under way for the Voice to take care of these "experts" who so efficiently have flim-flammed both the Germans and the Americans as to what has been going on.

In Washington, observers find nothing surprising about all this. It is — to use one of their own favorite terms — a typical "behavior pattern" among our numerous bureaucrats. No one is ever fired; he is just transferred. Well in advance of a shift, a new project or an expansion of an already existing agency is readied to keep the boys on the payroll.

On Capitol Hill: When the vote for GOP floor leader was taken, and the victory of Senator Bridges over Senator Saltonstall was announced, Senator Welker of Idaho gave Senator Lodge a ribbing. Lodge had backed Saltonstall almost on the same day he was undergoing his ordeal of placing Eisenhower in the nomination race. Welker said to Lodge: "Well, Lodge, if your other horse is as slow as Saltonstall, you'll have to dope him." One surprise of the voting was the action of Senator Margaret Chase Smith long classified as a "liberal", "me-too" Republican. She voted for the "anti-me-too" Bridges instead of the "liberal" Saltonstall. Signs that the lady Senator from Maine has moved rightward have multiplied recently.

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On January 10, a group of 37 GOP Senators supported a statement, presented by Senator Bridges, demanding that President Truman recall Ambassador Philip C. Jessup. The President had sent Jessup to the UN meeting in Paris despite the fact that the Senate failed to confirm him. (Jessup has been under fire for his role in the downfall of Free China.) In the resolution, Senator Bridges pointed out that the Senate thereby has voted "no confidence" in this emissary. It is reported that other Republicans may join the 37 who signified approval of this unusual petition.

It is reported that, if the Republicans had had the time to canvass the Democrats, they could have made the resolution bipartisan and won support from perhaps a score of the Administration majority. Bridges reportedly hopes that some of these may go along.

Mission to Moscow: The game of playing both sides against each other — with Britain in the middle — has assumed sharper outline, as suggested in this publication last week. Last weekend, an A.P. dispatch from Moscow reported that "since Churchill took office nearly three months ago, the Soviet press has refrained from objectionable comment on him and makes clear that Moscow would not rebuff him if he desires to come on a 'tension-easing' mission to Moscow." The dispatch goes on to say that the Russians are playing up what they call "fundamental antagonisms" between the U. S. and Britain and are claiming that Britons realize they are gaining "little if anything from close association with the United States." Those here who have access to transcripts of Soviet broadcasts confirm this new line of Soviet propaganda.

As this trend is developing, Churchill addresses the Congress of the United States. On the Hill, many legislators are more wary of the famous Briton than they were ten years ago. But some still seem prepared to fall again under his spell. It would be well for Americans to take Churchill's words at somewhat less than face value, and to reflect on his record as a public man.

In this connection, we have come across a pen portrait of Churchill by the English writer Hesketh Pearson, published in his volume *Men and Mummers*, in 1922. It breathed an attitude quite common in England between the two great wars when Englishmen recalled who had designed the debacle of Gallipoli: "Nothing short of death will prevent Winston from becoming Prime Minister of the country for which he has so nobly sacrificed all his principles. . . . No power on earth will keep him boxed up for long. The man who can survive the Antwerp and Gallipoli hazards of the late war will survive anything except national education. Like most men of his class, he is a half-finished product. His knowledge is synoptic, his instincts barbarous. But he has the supreme gift of plausibility, and this, in the ordinary course of things, should land us into several dozen minor campaigns and possibly one or two more spanking big wars before he is laid to rest by a sorrowing and grateful nation in Westminster Abbey."

France: The pattern described above — Britain in the middle between the U. S. and Soviet Russia — looms larger as a parliamentary crisis deepens in France. Naturally, Britain seems a more reliable partner in Europe as France weakens. Some observers here fear that France may be entering a prolonged and dangerous period of internal trouble, that such a period might end in a crashing climax if French arms are worsted in Indo-China. The situation of that territory is not happy: General de Lattre de Tassigny, brilliant commander there, died last week; and news dispatches report large armies of Communist Reds massing on the northern border, definitely threatening the survival of the smaller French forces. If the worst happens, if the Communists should drive the French from Indo-China, a political shuffle might well follow in Paris. It is feared that an ensuing coalition government might include the Communist Deputies. In such a case, the existence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization might be endangered. These are, indeed, pessimistic observations, perhaps unduly so. But they are being made today in Washington.

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The American Capital, as a matter of fact, offers little to leaven these dark apprehensions. When General Juin, Inspector General of the French Army, was in Washington last week, he suggested (so we learn from a good "grapevine" source) that Chiang Kai-shek should be permitted to raid the South China mainland. Such forays might effectively reduce the pressure on French forces in Indo-China. However, we also hear that the Joint Chiefs of Staff turned down the proposal, reportedly under pressure from the State Department. The latter — believe it or not — still clings to the notion that the U. S. should try to keep from "offending" the Chinese Communist Government.

The Bustless Era: "Five eminent economists", reports *The New York Times,* January 14, "told the United Nations today that prosperous years would be the rule rather than the exception in the future."

Fifteen months ago (November 22, 1950, to be exact), HUMAN EVENTS made the same prediction, in an article entitled "The Last Bust". In that article, Frank Chodorov pointed out that the government can avoid a "bust", which is a sudden decline in values, by increasing the volume of money in circulation; also, the government can prevent a stoppage of production, which is a consequence of the decline in values, by employing people in the making of pyramids or battleships. Everybody can be kept busy, and everybody's pocket can be kept filled with paper dollars, and the appearance of prosperity can be maintained. However, in the long run, this deflationary process must result in a gradual accommodation of the people to a lower standard of living. A policy of increasing the purchasing power while at the same time depleting the abundance of things purchasable may prevent a "bust", but it cannot prevent a general condition of poverty; if the process is gradual, the adjustment to poverty is made easy, and the cause of the poverty is lost sight of.

The five economists do not say that. They talk of "stabilization of world commodity prices through international arrangements"; they talk about "expanded long-term lending by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development"; they extol the benefits of "larger international monetary reserves, provided through the International Monetary Fund". Sifting this erudite garbage to its essentials, we get the idea that the world economy can be kept on an even keel by the control of money, which means the providing of purchasing power when the supply of things declines, thus keeping up the semblance of prosperity.

In the Magazines: See "How Stalin Can Win" by our contributor on military affairs, General Bonner Fellers, in the *American Mercury,* January issue. The author fears impending inflation and economic breakdown, arising from our enormous military spending. Nevertheless, he points out, "we are not getting security". The remedy lies in a "new over-all military strategy", based primarily on air power and psychological warfare.

For clever debunking of Bertrand Russell's current outburst in this country — see an editorial in the *Freeman,* January 14. This visiting English lecturer tries to get away with the assertion that "a Socialist can no longer speak his mind in this terrorized country". The *Freemen* blocks his kick.

Errata: We apologize for printers' errors in the Foreign Supplement for December, 1951, Vol. VIII, No. 52. In the paragraphs in which M. de Jouvenel reports the low cost of food in Britain, the pound sterling sign instead of the dollar sign was incorrectly printed before each figure.

Also, on the last page of the same supplement, in the last paragraph of the item entitled, "Britain and Europe", the sentence beginning "The expression of 'No change' does not seem . . ." should read "The expression of 'No change' does seem . . ."

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